

AFRICA. No. 3 (1896).

REPORT

BY

SIR JOHN KIRK



ON THE

DISTURBANCES AT BRASS.

*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.
March 1896.*

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Report by Sir John Kirk on the Disturbances at Brass.

No. 1.

Sir J. Kirk to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received August 30.)

My Lord,

Sevenoaks, August 25, 1895.

I HAVE the honour to report that on the 11th May I left England for the Niger Coast, accompanied by Captain L. R. Arthur, of the Rifle Brigade, in order to carry out the inquiry with which I had been entrusted into matters connected with the recent outrage committed by the people of Brass.

I was fortunate in finding Sir Claude MacDonald at Lagos, and in having him with me during the whole of the time I was on the coast; and I take this occasion of acknowledging the ready manner in which he and his staff gave me every help and assistance in the prosecution of my work. I have equally to acknowledge having had similar facilities afforded me by Mr. Wallace, Agent-General for the Royal Niger Company, and the officers at Akassa.

But for the help thus shown us we should have met with many difficulties and delays, and been put to considerable personal inconvenience.

We landed at Brass on the 6th June, and on the following day Sir Claude MacDonald, accompanied by Captain Gallwey and Vice-Consul Harrison went to Nimbe to summon the Brass Chiefs, who were awaiting my arrival, to appear at the Government Office on Monday, the 10th June, and to have with them the witnesses they might require.

On the day appointed four principal Chiefs arrived, accompanied by about sixty native witnesses.

I had decided at this preliminary meeting to see the Chiefs in the presence of Sir Claude MacDonald and his staff alone, in order to understand their case, and learn from them what charges would be advanced against the Company before calling upon Mr. Wallace to be present.

The Delegates said they had been sent as the Representatives of the whole body of Chiefs and people of the district. This I had previously ascertained from Sir Claude MacDonald and Mr. Harrison to be the case, and in proof of it the Chiefs gave me a written declaration.

The annexed abstract and accompanying documents will show what took place at the meeting.

The Chiefs having placed before me their grievances and defined the several charges, I asked Sir Claude MacDonald to allow Captain Gallwey, an officer of experience on the coast in no way personally connected with the Brass district or its recent troubles, to advise and assist the Brass Chiefs in arranging their witnesses into groups so as to simplify the hearing, and generally to act as their friend and advocate on the following day when Mr. Wallace and the officers of the Niger Company would be present.

At the meeting of the 11th June, of which a record of proceedings is inclosed, Sir Claude MacDonald and his staff were again present, also Mr. Wallace and those who had accompanied him from Akassa.

The first difficulty met with was that of interpreting correctly what the native

witnesses said. Two of the Chiefs knew a little English, but they were obviously not to be relied upon; the only other possible interpreter was a man equally compromised and interested, but I was compelled to have recourse to his services, there being no other.

After hearing the Chief's case, I asked Mr. Wallace, Agent-General of the Company, to state in the presence of the Brass Chiefs what would be required under the existing Regulations to enable a Brass native to trade legally on the Niger.

Full details of the reply given will be found in the proceedings. I will here only point out that as payment of 150*l.* annually would be the first step, this alone is an amount that would make trading by individual natives impossible, and would of itself practically exclude them from their old markets on the Niger.

All the disabilities under which the Brass people now labour arise, Mr. Wallace contends, from their having been originally placed outside the jurisdiction of the Company, for, had they been included, he says, not only would they have been exempted, like all other natives in the Company's territories from licence taxes, but they would also have been free to trade wherever they pleased, and not restricted to the open trade ports, as they now are.

Having thus ended the hearing of the Brass Chiefs' grievances, I was enabled, through the kindness of Sir Claude MacDonald, to visit Nimbe and Fishtown, the only places attacked by us, and to see the condition in which the people now were.

Fishtown, which we first visited, had been, before its destruction, only a miserable collection of native huts. It is distant in a straight line about 2 miles from the European settlement, but to be reached only by water through tortuous tidal creeks, the banks of which are lined with mangrove and offer no firm footing on shore. After our naval forces had partially destroyed Nimbe, the capital of the tribes, they burned Fishtown, which, although carefully prepared for defence by strong stockades and a powerful boom constructed across the creek and commanded by cannon, had been abandoned before our force landed.

So lately as 1893, that is less than two years before Akassa was attacked, the Brass population of Fishtown threatened to destroy the European trading settlement and Government station at Brass, which they could easily have done. This was only prevented by the dispatch of 200 of the Protectorate force who were telegraphed for, and by the arrival of two of Her Majesty's ships of war.

We found the people now busy rebuilding their huts, and I was much struck with the degraded type of features they generally presented, to be accounted for, no doubt, by their miserable surroundings. One thing was, however, equally remarkable—the large proportion of youths and children present in the village. Their town had in February been entirely destroyed by our naval forces, who burned it to the ground; but although since then the inhabitants had been living elsewhere, they seemed not to be suffering from want, their ordinary food consisting of fish, which they get in the creeks, and of bananas and cassava, which are grown, but only to a very limited extent.

On the 13th June we went up the Brass River to Nimbe, the principal town of the whole district, distant about 30 miles from the sea, and the residence of the Chiefs and the centre of native Government and superstition. The so-called Brass River is not an independent stream, but, in reality, the most eastern mouth of the Niger. Between the Brass on the left and the Forcados on the right, is the Niger Delta proper, cut up by innumerable creeks, which open by many mouths to the sea. Outside the delta of the Niger we have other river systems, all connected, however, by cross creeks.

Leaving the Protectorate yacht where the channel suddenly divides, we proceeded in a steam-launch past Sacrifice Island to the town of Nimbe.

This town consists of two quarters (of which only one now stands), separated from each other by a narrow creek. The quarter which was destroyed is called Ogbolomambri; this had been completely burned to the ground by our naval force before they retired. The other, called Basambri, separated by a narrow creek, still remains intact but for shot holes in the Chiefs' houses. It was from this quarter that the fire from the enemies' stockades was kept up by our naval and Protectorate troops while retreating.

Before the attack all valuable property would seem to have been removed from the town, so that the only damage inflicted by us was the destruction of the wooden buildings and mud huts in the one quarter which alone we occupied, and the loss by the enemy of about twenty-five killed, which so far as I could learn was the total. Such a small loss is to be accounted for by non-combatants having been removed

beforehand, and from the fact that the fighting men were generally well under cover, and their guns protected against rifle fire by heavy stockades.

Looking beyond the immediate neighbourhood of Nimbe, tall forest trees and clumps of cocoa-nuts palms could be seen in the distance, sure signs of native habitations and the sites of villages to which the people had for the time retired.

On our return to the yacht we visited Sacrifice Island, interesting as the spot where human sacrifices are still carried out. It was here the victims of the Akassa outrage were taken to be slaughtered, and where the bodies were mutilated in the manner usual with these people when human flesh is intended to be eaten.

Before leaving Brass I had a conversation with Vice-Consul Harrison, the officer in charge of the district. He repeated to me what has already been stated as to his position at Brass when the attack took place. He had only just taken over charge, was new to the district, and had been given no warning of danger by the officer he relieved. He had no guard at his disposal, no proper interpreter, and no means of communication. Under these conditions he was helpless, and even had he believed the anonymous warning which he received calling upon him to take immediate steps to prevent what actually happened, he could not have done more than go himself in a canoe to Nimbe, a proceeding not likely to have had much effect. This warning he sent on to Akassa, but so little did he believe it that he never even telegraphed to Bonny or to Lagos, which he would have done had he thought there was the smallest real danger. Mr. Harrison must under the circumstances be held to be free of blame. Mr. Harper Moore, his predecessor, having been previously a servant of the Company, well acquainted with the feeling that existed, and for some time in charge at Brass, ought to have been better informed and to have been prepared, since it is now clear that the attack was being planned long beforehand and had been openly threatened.

On the 15th June we left Brass, and passing through the main creek reached Akassa, where in the absence of a ship of war we became the welcome guests of Mr. Wallace, the Company's Agent-General, as we had been before then of Sir Claude MacDonald at Brass. I was here accompanied by Sir Claude MacDonald and by several of his staff who came to assist at the meeting to be held the following day.

At the inquiry held at Akassa on the 16th June, Sir Claude MacDonald and his staff being present, evidence furnished by Mr. Wallace was heard dealing with the arms question, smuggling, and other matters, and answering some of the statements previously made, a full account of which is given in the inclosed record of proceedings.

Towards the close of the meeting Mr. Wallace urged that it was right the Brassmen should be compelled to give up the skulls of the Company's servants who had been murdered, and which were still retained as trophies. Sir Claude MacDonald promised that he would do his very best to get these given up if it were possible.

Before quitting Akassa I visited the various factories and machine shops, the scene of the destruction done on the 29th January by the Brass people, and I was shown how the attack was made.

Having thus ended the inquiry at Akassa I proceeded to Forcados (where I examined the frontier), returning to England on the 24th July.

I shall in a separate Report state the results arrived at.

I must, in concluding the present Report, acknowledge the valuable and willing help rendered me by Captain L. R. Arthur, of the Rifle Brigade, who had been appointed to accompany me and to act as assistant on the Mission.

I have, &c.
(Signed) JOHN KIRK.

Inclosure 1 in No. 1.

SPECIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY, NIGER TERRITORIES.

Proceedings.—1st day, June 10, 1895.

Present :

Sir John Kirk, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., Her Britannic Majesty's Special Commissioner.
 Captain Arthur, Rifle Brigade.

Also—

Major Sir C. M. MacDonald, K.C.M.G., Her Britannic Majesty's Commissioner
 and Consul-General.

Captain H. L. Gallwey, Vice-Consul, Benin.

Mr. C. E. Harrison, Acting Vice-Consul, Brass.

Also, representing the Brass Chiefs and people, their selection being unanimous,
vide document attached, marked (A) :—

Chief Warri.

„ Karemma.

„ Nathaniel Hardstone.

„ Thomas Okea.

The first two representing Bassambri, and the remaining two representing Nimbe.

N.B.—Bassambri is included in Nimbe, but is on the opposite side of the creek.

Chief Warri acted as spokesman.

THE Special Commissioner opened the proceedings by informing the Chiefs that he had been sent out by Her Majesty to inquire fully into the facts of the late rising ; that the Queen and people of England were horrified at the cannibal orgies that had taken place. Any actual damage done could be paid for.

A letter from the Chiefs of Brass to Sir Claude MacDonald was then gone into. This letter was dated the 14th February, 1895. (Annex B.)

The Special Commissioner explained that he wanted to fully understand the meaning of the words as written in that letter.

The following explanation was given :—

We do not mean that actually over 100 men are killed annually by the Niger Company's people. We mean many are killed every year, and we calculate that including our own and other people that over 100 persons have been killed by the Company since the Charter was granted to them and up to the present time.

We do not want, nor expect, certain markets entirely to ourselves. All we now ask is only to be allowed to trade at those markets where we and our fathers used to trade at before the Charter was granted to the Company. We are quite ready and willing to trade alongside white men.

We mention the case of the Company killing two of our men at Akassa after the attack on that place.

Simply as one of the reasons why we killed our prisoners.

We hold to the ill-treating of women and wounding of people by the Company.

The Special Commissioner then requested the Chiefs to state their case.

They handed in the written statement annexed, marked (C), and said they were prepared to sign it in the name of all the Brass Chiefs and people, which was subsequently done.

The Special Commissioner then read the statement, and said he accepted it as fully explaining their grievances, future wants, and as a plea in justification of their conduct.

The Chiefs next handed in a statement in defence of their cannibalism, which is annexed, marked (D).

The Special Commissioner then requested the Chiefs to explain their meaning of certain passages in their statements.

The Chiefs explained that by "starvation driving a man to insanity" meant that they could not live without trade, that besides having to keep themselves and their

families, they were bound to keep their "boys." Also when there is no trade, as has been the case for a long time past, they cannot afford to keep even themselves, much less can they afford to keep their "boys." The consequence is their "boys" go away into the bush with the hope of finding food there. They (the "boys"*) never return, and they can only suppose they have died of starvation. They then said:—

We do not grow our own food with the exception of a few plantains. Our soil is too poor. We get our yams, &c., and our cattle from the Niger—chiefly from Abo and Onitsha.

We usually live on fish, yams, plantains, and cassava. We eat very little meat.

Our fathers used to trade as far up the Niger as Idda above Onitsha, and also a great deal in the Assay markets in the Warri branch—but not in Warri itself.

We do not trade in the New Calabar markets, the Niger markets being quite sufficient for us, if we were allowed to trade in them all as our fathers used to do.

Brass and Ijo languages are very similar, so the tribes understand each other.

We get our slaves as a rule from the Ibos, they cost from 10*l.* to 20*l.* each. These slaves rise up, and, if worthy, many become Headmen and Chiefs.

We do not call ourselves Brass men, but Nimbe.

(The Chiefs handed in a list of their towns, which is annexed and marked E.)

There are many Christians in our country; but many have gone back to their old faith, owing to the oppressions of the Niger Company.

We built both churches, the one at Brass and the other at Nimbe, but we had good trade in those days.

We got our cannon a very long time ago, with the exception of one bought by Chief Warri, two years ago, from a trader in the river, named Jinks. The cannon having been Mr. Jinks' property for years. We have very few cannon left, they were all taken or destroyed by the Queen's men when our town was destroyed; the few we have got are very old, chiefly Portuguese ones. We have no machine guns.

The closing of our markets by the Niger Company has cheapened the price of oil, but when we smuggle in oil we have to pay the villagers *en route* "hush money," and so, to us, the oil is expensive. The volume of trade is now very limited. Brass people smuggle in gin and tobacco but not guns.

We have very few rifles, chiefly very old ones, and very little ammunition, and we find great difficulty in getting caps.

The Chiefs then stated that the Company, when they heard the "big man" was being sent out to inquire into affairs, coerced the Ijos by giving them flags and "books," and ordered them to represent themselves as Company's people, otherwise the Company would punish them.

The Company also ordered the Ijos in question to have nothing to do with the Brass people, and were not even to pay them their just debts.

The Special Commissioner then said that the letter of the 14th February from the Chiefs of Brass to Sir Claude MacDonald would be put aside except as regards the tarring of women, and that the written statement (C) would take its place in so far as it concerned the allegations made against the Company.

The Commission then adjourned till to-morrow, the 11th June.

In the meantime, Mr. Wallace, Acting Agent-General of the Niger Company, would be requested to attend to-morrow's sitting, when evidence would be taken upon the several allegations made by the Brass people against the Niger Company.

(A.)

We, the Undersigned, do hereby declare that we are the chosen representatives of the Brass Chiefs and people, having been selected by general consent to present our case before the Commission.

(Signed)

WARRI, his X mark.

KAREMMA, ditto.

THOMAS OKEA, ditto.

NATHANIEL HARDSTONE, ditto.

Witness:

(Signed)

CUTHBERT E. HARRISON,

Acting Vice-Consul.

Brass, June 8, 1895.

* By "boys" is meant the whole household, men, women, and children, both free men and slaves.

(B.)

The Chiefs of Brass to Sir C. MacDonald.

Sir,

Nimbe, Brass, February 14, 1895.

We beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 13th instant with thanks:

We know that what you said must come to pass. You said that one or two Chiefs must come down and see you, and return home unmolested. We have before wrote you that whenever you arrive in this river and send for us, night or day, without hesitation we answered your summons. You must excuse us for not coming down for the Niger Company's matter. We again beg of you kindly to pardon us for this time, also for our unabling to come down for the Niger Company's palaver. Every river has markets to trade to feed themselves. And this trade that we had and finished to-day had been just began and finished, we would not have felt it so much. But the trade with Europeans had begun since our forefathers' time up to date. And as it is snatched away from our hands by the Niger Company, we really felt it keenly. You must please consider and investigate this matter. A person who has been accustomed to eat bread and knows its sweetness from his youth to manhood happens to offered by another man to eat dust instead of bread. At the very time he hears the word dust he will go mad. Starvation brings a man to insanity. Including the Niger district down to us the people killed by the Niger Company annually without cause are over 100 men. This action they kept secret from your knowledge. But we have explained all these to you before. Even the innocent women were caught, stripped naked, and painted with coal tar all over the body, and driven away. We have before informed you of the cruel oppressions done us by the Niger Company. You are fully acquainted with same. Through all these actions and their saying that they will oppress us to such an extent that we Brass men shall eat dust; so, instead of living in the country and die of starvation, we were obliged to die in their hands. You said in your letter that we kill innocent people. In the war the agents of the Niger Company caught two of our boys, put them in irons, and afterwards cut off their heads and cut their bodies to pieces and thrown in the water. If we are said to kill innocent people, the Niger Company first kill innocent people from us.

We are glad and thankful to hear that you have telegraphed to the Queen. We wished to see a favourable reply back. Part of what we are doing we are doing for the benefit of the Queen, because, as all the other rivers has large trade, and large duties were paid to the Queen, it is our anxious wishes to have the same large trade in our river, and large duties paid to the Government. Before this time we learn that the Niger Company are dependent men themselves. We are now glad to hear from your letter that they were subjects of the Queen. As we before said, if part of the Niger River is not given to us the war with the Niger Company will not stop; if given, we shall be glad and thankful.

We remain, &c.

(Signed) The Chiefs of Brass.

(C.)

*Memorandum.**Case of the Brass Chiefs.*

Many years ago our fathers used to make their living by selling slaves to Europeans. This Slave Traffic was stopped by the Queen's Government and a Treaty made in 1856, to the effect that they should discontinue that traffic, and enter into a legitimate one, and that if they did so an allowance called "comey" should be paid them by the traders on all produce brought down from the interior.

This they agreed to; so that from that time to now we have not shipped a single person, but have traded only in palm oil and kernels.

Some time after this Europeans began trading in the Niger. Seeing this we at once complained to the Consul, but with no effect.

In 1878 Consul Hopkins arrived here and offered us the markets from Abo downwards, but we claimed from Onitsha to the sea.

The Consul went away, promising to consult the Government, but unfortunately he died the following year, and nothing was done.

In 1884 Consul Hewitt arrived to renew old Treaties. We brought the subject of the restoration of our markets to us before him, and positively told him we would sign no more Treaties, because no good came of it, until he gave us some assurance that justice would be done us, and that our markets would be given back to us.

In reply, he said he had no power to make this promise without consulting the Government. We refused to sign the Treaty. Then he requested us to sign it only for six months if we would not sign it altogether, and he would try to get us the exclusive use of the Assay markets in the Warri branch.

On this condition we signed a Treaty.

At the end of six months Vice-Consul H. A. White induced us, on the same promise, to extend it for another six months, in order to await the reply of the Government.

While this was going on (1884-85) the French Government sent and asked us to enter into an agreement with it, and offered us large and costly presents, and promised us all sorts of good returns and aid; but we refused, thinking we would be more secure under the English.

In March 1886 Consul Hewitt arrived here with a printed form of Treaty for us to sign in place of the above-mentioned one, and said that the Government had decided that markets could not be divided nor given to any one particularly, that white men and black men might trade equally in all the markets, and that all and every market was to be free to everybody.

Seeing we could not do otherwise, we agreed to free trade. Article VI of this Treaty deals particularly with free trade.

About this time Consul Hewitt came back again, and, to our great surprise, informed us that the Government had granted to the National African Company a Royal Charter on the River Niger, which meant that they had full power to do what they liked in the river, and to impose and receive duties from everybody who wished to go there for the purpose of trade. We called his attention to the fact that our Treaty states that trade was free: how was it then that we were not allowed to go and trade freely at villages the people of whom we, our fathers, and grandfathers had traded with in past times?

The Company, which is now known as the Niger Company, has done us many injuries, which were made known to Consul Hewitt in writing; for some time after the Charter was granted they drove us away from our markets in which we and our forefathers had traded for generations, and did not allow us to get in our trust, or trade debts, some of which remain unpaid to this day. Neither will they permit the Ejoh or market people to come down and pay us.

In 1889, Major MacDonald, now our big Consul, came to us, and we told him of all these things, and he promised that he would lay our complaints before the Queen's Government; Consul Hewitt was still in the Rivers.

In 1891, he, Major MacDonald, came again and explained to us that it was the intention of the Queen's Government to send Consuls to these Rivers and that we should then have a Consul of our own who would specially look after our interests. He pointed out to us that this could not be done without money, and explained how the money could be raised by means of duty, and asked us whether we consented to pay these duties. At first we refused, because we could get no satisfactory answer about our markets: but eventually we signed, but begged the Major that he would do what he could to get some of our markets back for us. He then appointed a Vice-Consul, Captain MacDonald to the River.

Since then we have seen the Major many times, and he has always told us to be patient, but latterly things have gone from bad to worse, and the markets that we have are quite insufficient to maintain us.

We thoroughly understand that all markets are free, and open to everybody, black and white man alike; and we are quite willing to trade side by side with the white man at those markets. We do not now ask for any exclusive privileges whatever, but only that we may be allowed to trade without molestation at the places we and our fathers have traded in days gone by.

We are willing to pay fair duties; but we cannot understand, however, if all markets are free and open to black and white man alike, while there are many villages or markets in the Niger where neither are allowed to go and trade.

We submit that, if we have to go to Akassa, a distance of nearly 40 miles, to pay

our duties, and are only allowed to trade at certain places selected by the Niger Company called "ports of entry," and have to take out trade and spirit licences, and pay a very heavy duty going into the territories and a heavy duty coming out, it is the same thing as if we were forbidden to trade at all.

The Niger Company say, "We (the Company) have to do these things, why not you?"

We can only say that, with our resources, to carry out these Regulations and pay these duties means ruin to us.

The Niger Company are cleverer than we are. We humbly submit that we have a right, confirmed by our Treaty, to go and trade freely in the places we have traded at for all these generations. We are ready to pay to do so, but let us pay a fair duty, and conform to fair Regulations.

The duties and Regulations of the Company means to us ruin; of this there is no doubt.

We do not deny that we have smuggled, but under the circumstances can this be wondered at?

We have suffered many hardships from the Company's Regulations. Our people have been fired upon by the Company's launches, they have been fired upon from the Company's hulks, our canoes have been seized and goods taken, sometimes when engaged in what white men call smuggling, and sometimes when not.

The "chop" canoes coming from the Ejohs have also been stopped.

Within the last few weeks the Niger Company has sent messengers to the Ejohs and other tribes with whom we have always traded and said that any of them who traded with us at all, or who paid us their debts, would be severely punished, and their villages burnt.

We have evidence to prove all this, which we would like to lay before the big man who has been sent by the Queen.

All these unjust things that have been done to us, the many times we have been told to be patient and have been so, and the wrongs which we consider we have suffered are now worse than ever, all these drove us to take the law into our own hands and attack the Company's factories at Akassa.

We know now we have done wrong, and for this wrong we have been severely punished; but we submit that the many unjust oppressions we have borne have been very great, and it is only in self-defence, and with a view to have our wrongs inquired into, that we have done this thing. We have frequently asked the Consuls that have been put over us, from Consul Hewett to the present time, to tell us in what way we have offended the Queen to cause her to send this trouble on us.

Traders we are, have been, and always will be.

The soil of our country is too poor to cultivate sufficient food for all our people, and so if we do not trade and get food from other tribes we shall suffer great want and misery.

We fervently hope and pray that some arrangements may be arrived at which will enable us to pursue our trade in peace and quietness.

(Signed)

WARRI, his X mark.

KAREMMA, ditto.

THOMAS OKEA, ditto.

NATHANIEL HARDSTONE, ditto.

Witnesses:

(Signed)

H. L. GALLWEY,

*Deputy Commissioner and Vice-Consul,
Benin District.*

CUTHBERT E. HARRISON,

Acting Vice-Consul, Brass District.

Brass, June 8, 1895.

(D.)

Statement made by Chiefs after the Meeting of June 10, 1895.

The following is the statement made by the Representative Brass Chiefs in defence of the cannibalism which took place at Nimbe at the end of January 1895:—

They say that at a meeting which was held when it was determined to attack Akassa the question arose whether it would be advisable, should their fetish gods protect them and make the attack successful, to offer up any prisoners they might capture with the usual cannibalistic rites, especially as the fetish priests stated that the epidemic of small-pox, which was then raging throughout the Brass country, would not cease until these human sacrifices had taken place. The Chiefs who profess Christianity, and who are in the minority, headed by Chief Warri, said that if these cannibalistic rites took place they would not assist in the expedition against Akassa; a very stormy discussion followed, and the sacrifice question was allowed to drop without any definite arrangement having been come to.

After the attack on Akassa some sixty prisoners were taken to Nimbe, and an order was issued by Chief Koko, King of the Brass people, at the instigation of the fetish party, to all Chiefs, to deliver up their prisoners. Some of the Christian Chiefs being afraid of the fetish party, which is much the stronger of the two, gave up some of their prisoners, but Chief Warri utterly refused to surrender his, which nearly led to civil war in Nimbe. On the first opportunity the men rescued by the Christian party were sent down to the Consulate, they numbered in all twenty-five.

Cannibalism as a sacrifice to their native gods has been a religious rite with them from time immemorial; ten years ago an epidemic of small-pox broke out and was only stayed by a cannibal sacrifice such as took place on this occasion.

Some years ago the Christian party was much stronger and more powerful than their opponents; many Chiefs who were brought up as Christians have now gone back to fetishism, amongst these King Koko, the reason for this being that they had lost faith in the white man's God, who had allowed them to be oppressed, and their trade, their only means of livelihood, to be taken from them without just cause or reason.

Taken down by me from the four Representative Chiefs of Brass.

(Signed) CLAUDE M. MACDONALD,
Commissioner and Consul-General.

June 8, 1895.

(E.)

Names of Towns and Villages in the Nimbe District.

(Including the whole known as Brass.)

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Ogbolomambiri | } known as Nimbe. | 9. Emelesna. |
| 2. Bassambiri | | 10. Baletiemmo. |
| 3. Okeoama, known as Fishtown. | | 11. Iqueama. |
| 4. Tuwon. | | 12. Liaama. |
| 5. Odiamma. | | 13. Egaueologo. |
| 6. Obioku. | | 14. Sabatori. |
| 7. Diema. | | 15. Etiema. |
| 8. Fanbia. | | 16. Kirupogo. |

Inclosure 2 in No. 1.

Record of Proceedings at Brass, June 11, 1895.

Present :

Sir John Kirk, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., Her Britannic Majesty's Special Commissioner.
 Captain L. R. Arthur, Rifle Brigade, Private Secretary.

Sir Claude MacDonald, Her Britannic Majesty's Commissioner, Niger Coast Protectorate.

Captain H. L. Gallwey, Vice-Consul, Benin.
 Mr. C. E. Harrison, Acting Vice-Consul, Brass.

Mr. W. Wallace, Acting Agent-General, Royal Niger Company.
 Dr. Craster, Royal Niger Company.
 Captain W. Morgan, Acting Commander, ditto.
 Captain McCorquodale, ditto.
 Mr. Drew, Private Secretary, ditto.
 Mr. Liddard, Shorthand Writer, ditto.

The four Representative Brass Chiefs again attended.

Captain Gallwey conducted the case for the Brass people by request of the Special Commissioner.

Chief J. Spiff, Brass man, appears as Interpreter. He is objected to by Mr. Wallace, but the objection is overruled, as there is no other competent person available.

FIRST CHARGE.

That the Royal Niger Company have taken steps to prevent the Brass men from gathering in their Debts.

First Witness.—Okpayar, native of Ekpetiama, on the right bank of main Niger River, an Ijo man, states—

That the Ijo people told Captain Watson, Royal Niger Company, that they owed money to Brass men. Captain Watson said that if they went to pay the Brass men they would be punished.

These were old debts partly owed by himself (the witness).

Mr. Wallace stated that it is not the custom of the Royal Niger Company to recognize "trust debts."

Second Witness.—Otobo, of the same place and tribe as the first witness, states—

That he was merely a boy at the time of the controversy mentioned by the first witness, and therefore did not understand the matter.

SECOND CHARGE.

Firing on Canoes by the Royal Niger Company.

First Witness.—Otobo, the same man who appeared as witness in the first charge, states—

That he was a boy on the Royal Niger Company's hulk "Masaba," stationed in the Ekole Creek, under Mr. Thomas, within the last four years.

He has seen canoes shot at if they refused to stop when hailed. This has occurred both by night and day.

Many canoes answered the hail and came up alongside. He saw one Eko person wounded. The canoe was taken. It was empty. He saw one man killed. His name was Abeakuri. The canoe was brought alongside by a boat which fired on the canoe. This took place at night. When the canoe was returned it was Mr. Thomas who found the paddlers. The wounded man was taken home by the Royal Niger Company's people.

This case happened last year.

Second Witness.—Ebeiffar, resident of Sabagrega, partly of the Brass and partly of the Ijo tribes, states—

He was coming to Brass from Sabagrega in a canoe with six people. He was not called upon, but was fired on from the hulk "Masaba." It was at night, and very dark. Two men were wounded, one of them died in the canoe. The other fell into the water, wounded, and was picked up. This latter one died this year of small-pox. This case happened this year.

There was cassava (*i.e.*, food) in the canoe.

The canoe was not caught, but it put back.

The witness was coming to see his brother, who lives at Nimbe. He did not know that he had to pull alongside the hulk.

There were no rifles in the canoe, but six guns. They were all cap guns, but one flint gun.

The witness did not fire back at the hulk.

Mr. Wallace interposed, and said that Sabagrega is one of the Royal Niger Company's most important stations, and its laws are well known there.

Third Witness.—Oronuar, resident of Nimbe, Brass man, states—

That about five years ago he was at the house of Nanki, Chief of Ekowe. He had in his canoe two rifles, one revolver, and cartridges. His canoe was captured with the rifles, &c., and confiscated.

He had not gone to trade, but to talk. His canoe was fired on at night by the Royal Niger Company's black agent.

On being questioned by Mr. Wallace, the witness said that in 1877 he was cook to Mr. Watson, and joined after the firing on the hulk "Masaba."

Fourth Witness.—Obai, resident of Brass, states—

That about two years ago he was wounded in a canoe when on his way from Nimbe to Ekpetyama. When opposite the hulk "Masaba," of the Royal Niger Company, he passed a boat which was keeping watch. This boat fired on him without hailing. He had four boys with him, and was carrying gin.

The witness alone was hit.

There were soldiers looking out in the boat, and the affair happened at night, about 6.45 P.M., when it was dark.

The witness used to be in the employ of the Royal Niger Company, on the steamship "Florence."

Dr. Craster examined the wound of the witness, and pronounced it to be caused by a bullet.

Fifth Witness.—Nimia, resident of Nimbe, Brass man, states—

That he is a "boy" of Chief Kari. He was *en route* to Akassa from Nimbe to buy a canoe. He was met by a launch on the Akassa Flats on his canoe with five other "boys." The launch fired on them, and they ran the canoe into the bush. The launch waited at the end of the creek. The witness and his comrades left the canoe and made off to hide. The launch seized the canoe the next day. In the canoe there were four and a-half cases of gin and cloth. There were no arms in the canoe.

This happened one evening after dark, about six months ago.

The witness was called to from the launch, but he did not understand. He did not ever fire on the troops nor on the launch.

Captain Morgan said he thought that this was very likely a case well known to him, and that the canoe refused to answer when hailed; also that the canoe fired on the launch.

Dr. Craster examined this witness' wound, and pronounced that it was caused by a bullet.

THIRD CHARGE.

Seizing Canoes by the Royal Niger Company.

First Witness.—Kondor, resident of Nimbe, a Brass man, states—

That he was trading at Egebri, which is in the creek below the hulk "Masaba," on the left bank of the Niger River, near the market. He was in a canoe, and another canoe belonging to Ekbela was there. A launch came in and commenced firing at the canoes. The canoes were abandoned, and the oil and the kernels which the witness had in his canoe were upset into the water. This happened last year.

The Egebri people gave the oil, &c., which was picked up, to the occupants of the launch, but nothing was returned. The launch was not fighting the town.

The witness did not know why the launch was after him. He had taken up gin to buy oil, &c.

The witness had one cap-gun, and the "boys" jumped over with the other cap-guns. They had no rifles in the canoe. They did not fire at the launch. The canoe belonged to Karema, the master of the witness. The launch had a machine-gun.

The witness did not report himself anywhere to pay duty.

During the evidence of this witness Chief Warri asked how the Brass people were to know which side of the boundary Egeberi was.

Second Witness.—Iowe, resident of Egebri, an Ijo man.

Corroborates the above evidence, and states that it happened last year.

The canoes did not fire.

The launch commenced firing with a machine-gun.

He had been buying oil at Egebri with gin, tobacco, and cloth.

The Brass men did not fire at the launch at all, nor raised a gun. The occupants of the launch demanded the oil which was upset, or else the town would be smashed.

Third Witness.—Numindi, a Brass man, states—

That he was in a war canoe of Ekbela, his master, and he had gone to trade at Egebri with tobacco and gin for oil and kernels.

A launch came up and fired at them. He and his people jumped into the water.

The launch towed the canoes away.

Nobody at all fired on the launch.

It happened by day. The witness did not see who was in the launch.

The canoe has not been returned.

There were three cap-guns and one Snider rifle in the canoe.

When questioned concerning big guns being in the canoe, the witness says, as the Royal Niger Company's people took the canoe, they will know about big guns being on it.

Fourth Witness.—Pomona, resident of Nimbe, a Brass man, states—

That he is a "boy" of Alagoa.

He was trading at Amassama, and when he heard a launch was coming to fire the town he hid his canoe, as he was afraid. This happened about eight months ago. The launch took off his canoe and another one belonging to Nathaniel Hardstone. His canoe has not been returned.

The canoe was the property of Mr. Quail.

There were two puncheons of oil and some kernels in the canoe.

The witness ran away.

The launch did not fire at him. The oil was bought with gin.

He took away the only gun he had; it was a cap-gun.

There were no cartridges in the canoe, as there was no rifle.

The witness has made no attempt to get back the canoe.

FOURTH CHARGE.

Tarring Women.

First Witness.—Akure, resident of Ekpetyama, Ijo woman, states—

That when on her way to Otowa from Ekpetyama she was hailed at the opening of the Ekole creek by the hulk.

She refused at first to answer, but at last, being frightened, she went up.

At the time she was *enceinte*.

She was outraged on board the hulk by the clerk.

She was offered a small present of biscuit and two heads of tobacco. She refused to accept them at first, but finally consented to do so on threat of being killed. She threw the presents overboard from the canoe.

This took place about two years ago.

She had a miscarriage.

It was the clerk in charge who outraged her. He was a light black man.

She is the wife of Bebei. He is not a "boy," but Chief of Ekpetyama.

She did not report to any one that she had been outraged.

Second Witness.—Akassa Bebei states—

That she formerly lived at Akassa, but now lives at Nimbe. Her master is a Brass man.

She was mistress to a clerk at Akassa, being sent there by her mistress from Nimbe.

When the clerk was going home he wished her to accompany him, but Captain Christian (the European beachmaster at Akassa) sent to the captain of the ship, and had her sent back. Captain Christian then took her into a store, and coal-tarred her when stripped.

There was another white man present.

After this she went back to Akassa.

She did not report the matter to any one as "The white man had done it."

Captain Christian ordered some Kroo boys to tar her. It was done all over her.

Mr. Wallace said Captain Christian left nearly three years ago, and is now at Sierra Leone.

Third Witness.—Gboribo, a Brass man, states—

That the woman was tarred some time ago, but is not sure when. He was a fisherman.

He saw the woman going home naked and tarred.

Captain Christian was the beachmaster.

He did not see whether the woman was crying or not.

(This closes the evidence brought forward by the Brass people.)

Captain Gallwey then informed the Special Commissioner that, although there were many more witnesses who could be called, he considered the Brass Chiefs had proved the several allegations made by them against the Royal Niger Company in their "case;" and that, therefore, no more witnesses would be called.

Chief Warri, one of the Brass Representatives, makes a statement and says:—

That some of the people who appeared to-day as witnesses come from towns in the territory of the Royal Niger Company, and are afraid of being punished by the Royal Niger Company's officials for appearing before the Special Commission to-day.

The Special Commissioner, on the word of Mr. Wallace, assures Chief Warri that they need have no fear.

Chief Warri proceeds to say that, with regard to the 7 puncheons of oil called on by the Royal Niger Company, the officials of the Company gave the people of Egebri 3 kegs of powder to defend themselves against the Brass men should the latter come to attack them.

Also, on Chief Warri complaining that the officials of the Royal Niger Company will not allow the Brass people who are on the former's territories to come down, it is explained to him that if he applies in a proper manner, through Her Majesty's Com-

missioner for the Niger Coast Protectorate, these Brass people will be returned, should it be their wish to do so.

Mr. Wallace then being questioned by the Special Commissioner as regards the duties, &c., a Brass man would be liable to, as well as the penalties for disregarding the same, who might desire to trade legitimately in the Royal Niger Company's territories, states that, in the first place, he would have to take out a general licence, value 50*l.*; next he would be required to pay 100*l.* for a spirit licence, and in addition he would have to pay 10*l.* for each separate trading port he may wish to trade at, this 10*l.* being the price of a licence for each separate port; then, in conforming to the above rules, a Brass man must proceed to the Customs offices of the Company at Akassa or Ekole to declare the goods that he is bringing into the Company's territories; and, similarly, when leaving, he must visit Akassa or Ekole to pay export duty on the produce he has purchased and is taking out; he is then free to proceed by any creek or river he may wish.

All "chop" canoes pass in and out free, but they must reply if they are hailed.

The penalty for smuggling or trading without a licence is 500*l.*

Mr. Wallace states no slaves have been captured in transit in the Lower Niger lately.

The Special Commissioner felt perfectly satisfied at the interpretation of Chief J. Spiff.

Brass, Niger Coast Protectorate, June 11, 1895.

Inclosure 3 in No. 1.

Inquiry held by Sir John Kirk, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., &c., Her Britannic Majesty's Commissioner, at Akassa, June 16, 1895.

Present :

Sir John Kirk.
Captain L. R. Arthur.

Sir Claude MacDonald.
Captain Gallwey.
Mr. Harrison.
Captain Searle.

Mr. Wallace.
Mr. Bedford.
Dr. Craster.
Captain Morgan.
Mr. Drew.
Mr. McTaggard.

FIRST charge brought by the Brass men dealt with was that of one of the Company's launches firing first at the town of Egeberi.

Witness S. R. Savage, brought up by Mr. Wallace to prove that this was not so.

S. R. Savage, native of Lagos, clerk in charge of Ekowe Station, was asked what he knew concerning the case in question.

Witness said that on the 21st June, 1894, I left Ekowe in the launch "Borgu," in company with Mr. Wood, District Agent for the Delta, for Enowarri, to settle a palaver between these two towns. On passing Egeberi we saw two Brass canoes alongside that place, and as soon as the Brass men sighted the launch they took their rifles and ran ashore. Mr. Wood told him to hail these people and tell them not to be afraid. There was no reply to this, and the Brass men commenced to fire from the bank. Firing was not commenced from the launch then. Four men were wounded on board, and later on fire was opened from the launch over the heads of the people on shore.

Captain Gallwey.—How was the gun sighted, and how could you tell it was being fired over the heads of people on shore?—*A.* I could not say how it was sighted; I did not fire it.

Sir J. Kirk.—Who gave the order to fire over the heads of people on shore?—*A.* The officer on board.

Consul-General.—Was anyone killed or wounded on shore?—*A.* No.

Consul-General.—Who told you this?—*A.* The King of the town of Egeberi.

Consul-General.—Is this the Egeberi, the place spoken of as being in the loop creek on the left bank?

Mr. Bedford.—Yes, the same place.

Mr. Wallace.—What happened when the firing ceased?—*A.* The launch had some difficulty in turning to get out of the creek, and in doing so her paddle-wheels fouled one of the canoes and capsized it.

Sir J. Kirk.—Did you get the oil contained in this canoe?—*A.* Yes, afterwards.

Sir J. Kirk.—Can Captain Morgan give any account of what has been seized from smugglers at any time?

Captain Morgan.—All the books on this subject having been lost, I can only give roughly what was confiscated, but in one instance forty-six cases of gin were seized in a canoe, and in several other instances lesser quantities of gin were seized.

Sir J. Kirk.—Were there any cases where rifles were seized, and of what description?

Captain Morgan.—Yes. Snider rifles were taken from many of these canoes; I should say they were there for the canoe's defence.

Sir J. Kirk.—Was there any powder or other contraband goods in these canoes?

Captain Morgan.—No powder. Their cargoes were almost entirely composed of gin.

Mr. Bedford, on being asked if he had any evidence respecting smuggling canoes, said that he had known of many cases, but that when he had come across gin being smuggled into the territories it was in hundreds of cases, not as in Captain Morgan's seizures of a few.

Sir J. Kirk.—To prevent this smuggling how many creeks are there to guard?

Mr. Bedford.—I would say six.

Consul-General.—If these were blocked, could not the natives still communicate through the mangrove creeks?

Mr. Bedford.—I do not think so.

Sir J. Kirk.—How many small or large creeks that a small canoe could get through are there between Akassa and Ekole?

Mr. Bedford.—I should say about eight.

Sir J. Kirk.—Can it be shown that rifles have been smuggled into the territories for the purposes of trade?

Mr. Wallace.—Yes.

Nangi, a Chief of Ekowe, was called as a witness on this subject.

Mr. Wallace.—How many rifles have you got?—*A.* Five.

Mr. Wallace.—How many are there in your town?—*A.* Thirty.

Mr. Wallace.—Where did you get them from?—*A.* The Brass men sold them to me.

Mr. Wallace.—How long is it since you purchased the last rifle?—*A.* Two native years (*i.e.*, equal to twenty months).

Mr. Wallace.—How long is it since you purchased cartridges for these rifles?—*A.* A year ago.

Mr. Wallace.—How many did you purchase?—*A.* 100 rifle cartridges, and 300 fowling-piece cartridges.

Mr. Wallace.—Have you any fowling-pieces?—*A.* One.

Mr. Wallace.—A breech-loader?—*A.* Yes.

Mr. Wallace.—Do you know whether Brass men sell rifles to other villages?—*A.* Yes.

Sir J. Kirk.—Have you seen this yourself?—*A.* I have both seen and heard it.

Mr. Wallace.—A large or small quantity?—*A.* Sometimes a case.

Sir J. Kirk.—Do people smuggle up rifles in cases?—*A.* Yes. Twenty in a case.

Mr. Wallace here said that he was not only endeavouring to prove that the Brass men are well armed, but they are sufficiently so to be able to sell a large quantity of arms.

Consul-General said that he should think the number of rifles in the territories now was phenomenal, and brought forward the fact that a squad of Bonny men fighting at Ashantee,* were allowed to take their rifles back to Bonny after the war was over.

* As British Allies in the Ashantee War.

Captain Morgan.—Rifles will not last in Africa such a number of years as that.

Consul-General.—Yes; if they are looked after.

Mr. Wallace here asked the Commissioner whether it was necessary to bring further proof of the smuggling of rifles into the territories.

Sir J. Kirk.—I think not. Have you any specimens of the rifles seized?

Mr. Wallace.—Yes.

Consul-General.—Do you wish to prove that rifles and cartridges have been imported since the commencement of my Administration?

Mr. Wallace.—Yes.

Consul-General.—Is it not possible that the Company have been more strict in preventing the smuggling of rifles during the last few years, and have thus discovered more?

Mr. Wallace.—I do not attribute the number discovered to this cause.

Four Snider rifles were produced for examination by Sir John Kirk, and the place pointed out on the map where they were purchased, Ingafoi.*

Sir J. Kirk.—When were these rifles purchased?

Mr. Palmer.—Last November, by a man from Ingafoi, and later by one from this man.

Sir J. Kirk.—Is this the man who offered to purchase another 100 rifles?

Mr. Palmer.—Yes.

Dadi, a Hausa Fulari, native of Kapera, was here called as the man who had purchased these rifles.

Mr. Wallace.—What do you do for a living?—*A.* I am a hunter of elephants.

Mr. Wallace.—Where did you get the four rifles from now produced?—*A.* A long time ago, from Calabar.

Mr. Wallace.—How many months?—*A.* A year ago.

Consul-General.—Does he mean Old Calabar?—*A.* No; New Calabar, close to Okrika, at a place called Onari.

Sir J. Kirk.—Does he mean the place indicated on the map about 30 miles east of Oguta Lake?

Mr. Wallace.—Yes.

Mr. Wallace to Witness.—How many rifles did you purchase when you got the four now here?—*A.* Forty.

Mr. Wallace.—Could you have obtained any more had you had the money?—*A.* I could have purchased more.

Consul-General.—This man is only proving what I knew and could prove before.

Sir J. Kirk.—Yes, but it is important the smuggling of rifles should be fully proved.

Mr. Wallace.—Could you buy cartridges in packages or cases?—*A.* In cases or packages.

Sir J. Kirk.—Who sold these rifles to you?—*A.* A native trader of Calabar, Esheofun.

Mr. Wallace.—Do you know who this man was?—*A.* He belongs to Amachre, a Calabar Chief's family.

Sir J. Kirk.—Are these cartridges (produced) those that you bought?—*A.* I bought them at the same time as the rifles.

Mr. Wallace.—How many did you buy?—*A.* Two hundred.

Sir J. Kirk.—Were there plenty for sale when you bought these?—*A.* Yes, plenty.

Consul-General.—What did you pay for one of these rifles?—*A.* One tusk of ivory for twenty-six rifles.

Consul-General.—What was this ivory worth?—*A.* It was a 60-lb. tusk (about 30l.).

Sir J. Kirk.—You, Mr. Wallace, as a merchant, can perhaps tell me what these rifles would be worth.

Mr. Wallace.—I cannot say.

Sir J. Kirk.—I do not see how they can afford to sell them for about 1l. each.

Mr. Bedford said that he thought the traders would not be selling-off their stocks of rifles unless they could obtain further supplies.

Consul-General.—I do not think the Calabar traders would wish to keep a stock of rifles; the up-country tribes might.

* About 30 miles to east of Oguta Lake.

Sir J. Kirk.—This witness, Dadi, has given valuable information, and fixed the fact that rifles are being bought and sold.

With regard to the allegation by Brass men that the Ejoh tribes do not wish for the Company's rule.

Sir J. Kirk.—I am of opinion that the Brass men referred to places situated above the Ekole Creek. Have you any witnesses from places above there?

Mr. Bedford produced statements made by Chiefs of several towns in the regions mentioned which he had taken down some three weeks ago. All of these going to refute the Brass men's argument.

Consul-General.—Have not a large number of these villages been burnt down for participation with Brass?

Mr. Wallace to Mr. Bedford.—Please state what towns have been destroyed?

Mr. Bedford.—Kiama, lower portion of Sabagreia, Tombia, and Permoberi.

Nangi, a Chief of Ekowe, called on the same subject.

Sir J. Kirk.—Did the Brass men ask you to assist in their movement against the Company?—*A.* Yes, Koko, of Brass, sent a demijohn of rum, and asked me to kill all the Company's people at Ekowe, and to call on the surrounding towns to assist. I gave the rum to the Station Agent.

Sir J. Kirk.—When did this happen?—*A.* Three days after the Akassa war.

Otobo, a Chief of Otuwwho, was then called.

Sir J. Kirk.—Do the Brass men come up to trade at your village?—*A.* Yes, they have traded there.

Sir J. Kirk.—Do your townspeople intermarry with Brass?—*A.* No, because Brass men are slaves.

Sir J. Kirk.—Do you give your freeborn daughters in marriage to Brass men?—*A.* No.

Captain Gallwey.—Do Brass men do this with your people?—*A.* No.

Sir J. Kirk.—Have you been to Nimbe?—*A.* Yes.

Sir J. Kirk.—Did you stay long?—*A.* Two or three days.

Sir J. Kirk.—Did you go to trade?—*A.* I went on a friendly visit.

Consul-General.—Do children of your town never intermarry with children of Brass?—*A.* No, because if such a thing were to take place, all the surrounding Ejoh tribes would look upon us with scorn, Brass men being slaves, and Ejohs free.

Sir J. Kirk.—Who is your friend at Nimbe?—*A.* Okuku.

Mr. Wallace.—Do Brass men ever buy slaves from his town?—*A.* No, they do not do so at Otuwwho, but I cannot speak for the other towns.

Mr. Wallace, respecting the loss of revenue to the Company, here said that all the Brass imports and exports should be the Company's.

Sir J. Kirk.—Has no Brass man ever paid duties or taken out a licence?

Mr. Bedford.—No.

Sir J. Kirk.—Have they ever cleared at Ekole?

Mr. Bedford.—No.

Sir J. Kirk.—Could they do so if they wished.

Mr. Bedford.—Yes.

Mr. Bedford stated that the Brass Chief Spiff came over to Akassa two or three years ago, and said he would go wherever he wished in the territories, and would take out no permit or licence. This he did.

Sir J. Kirk.—Had he dutiable articles in his canoe at the time?

Mr. Bedford.—No, only rifles.

Sir J. Kirk.—The point is admitted by all the Brass men that the markets are situated within the Company's territory.

Mr. Wallace here asked for the return of the skulls of the Company's employees murdered on the 29th January.

Consul-General.—I saw about forty skulls at Nimbe during the time I was there when it was being destroyed, but omitted bringing these skulls away from the place. I will make an attempt to get these if they are wanted, and will do my utmost in the matter, as I think they should be regained.

Sir J. Kirk.—Do you know how many Brass men were killed?

Mr. Bedford.—We could question the Delta natives on the subject.

Sir J. Kirk.—Where did the Kroo boys come from who were killed?—French colonies or others?

Mr. Wallace.—From all along the Kroo coast.

Sir J. Kirk.—There has been a sort of idea at home that European influence was at work behind the Brass men when they attacked Akassa.

Mr. Wallace.—Many Brass men have been taught trades by the Company, and these men would have sufficient knowledge to carry out what was done.

Respecting the alleged case of rape on a native woman at the "Masaba."

Akebofa, a native of Ekole, was called to give evidence upon this subject.

Mr. Wallace.—Do you remember, or have you ever heard, of a woman named *Ecoreh*, of Opteamia, being ill-used by a clerk on the "Masaba"?—*A.* No.

Mr. Wallace.—Were you likely to have heard had such a thing happened?—*A.* Yes, because the town of Ekole and the hulk "Masaba" are so close.

Mr. Bedford—Would not such a thing be the talk of the country?—*A.* Yes, all the surrounding towns would know about it.

Sir J. Kirk.—What routine is kept up for the prevention of smuggling?

Captain Morgan here described fully to *Sir J. Kirk*, with the aid of a map the whole system of the Company's preventive service and the methods adopted for carrying it into effect.

Consul-General.—Has the hulk "Masaba" ever been in charge of a native?

Mr. Wallace.—She has been in charge of a Sierra Leone clerk, a foreigner, for some years.

Consul-General.—Would he have the same power to fire upon smuggling canoes as *Captain Morgan*?

Mr. Wallace.—Certainly.

Consul-General.—Have you ever had a sergeant of constabulary in charge of a watch party or guard for preventive purposes, and had he power to fire on a canoe if it refused to stop when called upon?

Mr. Wallace.—Yes.

Mr. Wallace contended that the Brass people are now in a better position and stronger than ever; that although the town was destroyed their power remains.

Sir C. Macdonald said that the Brass people were to be punished, not destroyed.

Mr. Wallace here placed another point before the Commissioner, which was that the Brass men are now stronger than they ever were before, and further trouble with them may arise at any moment.

Consul-General admitted that the disarmament of the Brass men was a large order, and could not be easily undertaken.

Mr. Wallace thought, nevertheless, that it ought to be done at once.

Also that the Company would have to commence the Delta patrol again.

Sir J. Kirk.—Of course, that will be more necessary now than before.

Captain Morgan.—The Company will also require to keep a large constabulary detachment in the Delta, and these men were wanted elsewhere.

Mr. Wallace.—Can a decision be arrived at as to the boundary on the left bank?

Consul-General.—Suggest an amicable arrangement be arrived at by the Representatives of both Administrations, laying down together some provisional marks to be taken as the boundary for the time being.

Sir J. Kirk.—I think this would be a good arrangement.

No. 2.

Sir J. Kirk to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received August 30.)

(Extract.)

Sevenoaks, August 25, 1895.

IN a previous despatch of this day's date I have given an account of how the investigation with which I had been intrusted was carried out on the spot. I will now state the results arrived at, dealing in succession with the various points raised by the Chiefs of Brass during the inquiry.

1. The Chiefs of Brass allege that the Royal Niger Company's officials have been in the constant habit of firing upon their canoes, without cause, whenever seen on the Niger, of shooting their people, and seizing both canoes and cargo.

In their letter of the 14th February last the Chiefs said, in justification of their own acts, that "the people killed by the Niger Company annually and without cause, were over 100." This estimate they reduced, when examined before me, to about that number in all since the Company was first established, or to about one-tenth of what they originally stated.

On individual type cases on which these charges were founded being gone into, they resolved themselves into this. Canoes from Brass had undoubtedly been fired upon by the Company's officials on the Niger and people shot—which was admitted

on the part of the Company, although they said this never happened when the Regulations which required canoes to stop when hailed were complied with. In nearly every case, however, it appeared on the evidence of the Brass witnesses themselves that they had been trading in the Niger territories in violation of the Company's Regulations, which must have been well known since they were so often complained against, and that they persisted in attempting to pass the guard-ship, generally at night; also that they either had on board, or had been dealing in contraband or dutiable articles, and that they generally carried fire-arms of a class prohibited alike by the Company's rules and by the provisions of the Brussels Act, which the Company, as an agency of the British Government, was bound to see enforced at its frontiers.

In one of the cases brought forward as an instance of arbitrary action, the Company were able to show that the Brass canoemen had been the aggressors, and that they were only fired upon from the Government launch after several of the Company's people had been wounded.

Under conditions such as these, the Company's Regulations being what they are, and having been issued with the full sanction and previous approval of Her Majesty's Government, to whom they had in the first place been submitted, it is difficult to see how the law could be carried out without recourse in the end to force. Those engaged in setting them aside ought to have been fully prepared for the consequences and to run the risk of accidents to the agents they employed in carrying on this contraband trade, and the occasional loss of these vessels and goods when captured.

2. I have inquired into what the Brass Chiefs have advanced as to hunger and destitution having driven them to take the law into their own hands, after their repeated representations had been so long neglected. In their letter of the 14th February, they said that starvation brings a man to insanity, and in another that it was better to die of the guns of the Niger Company than of hunger. These words they explained to mean that they suffered so severely through a diversion of trade from the port of Brass, and from being excluded by the Regulations of the Company from the Niger Territories in which they and their fathers had traded freely from time immemorial, that they found themselves no longer able to maintain themselves, their retainers, and their slaves, as before.

The food of the people of the Brass district consists chiefly of fish which can be caught in their own waters and of shell-fish, the remains of which were seen by us in great heaps near the doors of every native hut both at Nimbe and Fishtown. They also grew a few plantains, cocoa-nuts, and a little cassava on their own farms. Palm oil they have, if not for trade, at least in quantity sufficient for cooking, but they depend for their chief supply of vegetables, such as yams, and for the few cattle they possess, upon the Niger markets, which can only be reached by entering the Company's territory.

It was, however, shown that, as far as canoes laden with food are concerned, they had not been interfered with by the Company, provided they conformed to the rule, which, in order to prevent smuggling, required all vessels to stop if called upon, and, if necessary, to submit to visit.

It is impossible to believe that those who found no difficulty in evading the Company's Custom's laws where smuggling was concerned, and in passing, as we shall see, large quantities of smuggled cargo, could have suffered from the stoppage of food supplies which they might have passed openly and freely. It was clearly not in this way that they suffered, but by finding duties imposed upon the gin, tobacco, arms, and other dutiable or forbidden goods, and in barter and in obtaining provisions.

From actual hunger or destitution caused by want of food, the Brass people certainly never suffered. They always were able, even in the face of the Company's Rules, to carry on a sufficient trade to meet their wants, but no doubt the appearance of Europeans on the Niger had deprived them of a right they long claimed and asserted by force to the exclusive trade on the river, and the frontier-line drawn between them and their markets, coupled with the high duties and taxes therein demanded, had driven them to smuggling, but had not caused famine.

The Brass people, as I saw them, showed no sign of want, although at that time they had been shut off for several months, in consequence of their own deeds, far more effectually than before from the Niger food markets.

The plea of destitution, therefore, resolves itself into the general question of the

exclusion of the Brass people from their trade markets, which we shall deal with next.

3. With reference to the complaint that the Brass people have been excluded by the Regulations of the Royal Niger Company from their old trade markets on the Niger, and that they have no others open to them, it is first necessary to bear in mind that the Rules they complain of were approved by Her Majesty's Government five years before what is now known as the "Niger Coast Protectorate," was established, or the present boundary-line defined which cuts them off.

The Agent-General of the Company stated, in the presence of the Chiefs of Brass, in answer to questions put by me, that, in order to be able to trade legally on the Niger, any native of Brass, being technically regarded under the Company's laws as a foreigner in the Company's territory, would be required to comply with the same Rules as affect the largest trading Corporation. He would thus, I was told, be required to pay yearly a sum of 50*l.* for licence to trade, with a further sum of 10*l.*, also yearly, for every station he traded at, and he would then only be allowed to trade at such stations as had been declared open for that purpose, and nowhere else. He would next be required to pay 100*l.* annually if he intended to trade in spirits, without which, I may remark, trade in the Delta is at present impossible.

Having thus acquired the right to commence trade in the Niger Territory, he would on first entering have to report his arrival and obtain a clearance either at Akassa or higher up at the mouth of the Ekole Creek, and pay the Company's duties of 2*s.* per gallon on spirits, the same spirits having already paid at the rate of 1*s.* to the Protectorate at Brass, and so on with other articles, the duty on which is in some cases still greater than on spirits. After his barter was over he would, before leaving the Territory, be called on to pay 20 per cent. export duty on the value of all produce.

In the above I have stated the rates of duty roughly, in order to simplify the case, the principle being the same in all.

It will thus be seen that the Rules in force are practically prohibitory to native trade, and the Brass men are right in saying that this is so. They are for all intents and purposes excluded from the Niger if they are to respect these Regulations, for how could they possibly pay such a heavy licence tax and sell at a profit goods on which duty had previously been paid to the Protectorate, thus placing them at a disadvantage in the case of spirits at 1*s.* a-gallon to those who introduced the same article at Akassa or through Forcados at Ganagana, and paid duty to the Company's revenue only.

Had the Brass men been originally included in the Niger Territory, I was assured by Mr. Wallace that none of the above onerous Rules would have applied to the natives, and the duties would then have been paid not by them, but by the European trader at the place of export. This I have no doubt would have been the case then, but it is with the present situation we have to deal in seeking a remedy, and what might have answered formerly may not be suitable after what has happened, or sufficient to meet similar difficulties on the frontiers elsewhere.

4. The Brass tribes are a mixed race, recruited largely by the purchase of slaves from the pagan cannibal tribes, chiefly the Ibo people, living inland, and by domestic slaves born in their families, the status of the child depending on that of the mother.

Slaves, I was told, are generally obtained when young, and cost on the average from 10*l.* to 20*l.* each. Once purchased, they grow up in the families, and constitute a large part of the wealth of the richer classes, but they are always liable to be sold. Such slaves as are too old to be taught to work in canoes, or employed as trading agents (called "canoe boys," or "trade boys"), become labourers, and are employed carrying loads or cultivating the farms. If human sacrifices are needed, it would be from these the victims would first be taken, but slaves generally are valued, and hold a high place, often rising to power by marriage with free women of position in the tribe. Of this, I believe the present head Chief, known as King Koko, is an example, and there are others of whom I was told, who, still held as slaves, are now prominent men in the Councils, and the husbands of free women, whose children, therefore, are free-born.

The religion of the people generally is fetishism, or a belief in charms. Missions have as yet done little to influence the belief of the people. Such outward Christianity as exists seems only to hide the fetishism that appears to be the

pervading influence underneath. It is said that King Koko, the most bigoted fetishman, and the leader of the late cannibal outrages, was at one time a professing Christian, as also was another who took a very prominent part in these barbarities, and who had less excuse, having been at one time under instruction in England, and intended for the Ministry. The missionaries, like the officials, never can have a real influence, or understand the people, until the language has been reduced and acquired by them, and until they can thus deal direct with the natives, and not through uneducated and often interested native interpreters, who speak only the broken English known on the west coast, and conveying no definite meaning.

The Brass people are by nature traders, never producers. They have been called "middlemen," but this is no disparagement, for the Liverpool trader is after all nothing but a middleman himself as much as the Brass native, on whom he depends to distribute his gin, tobacco, and gunpowder, and to collect from the producers further inland the palm oil, &c., on which he relies for his return profits. Under judicious and firm handling the Brass man ought to be both happy and useful; there is an ample field open to him in a deadly climate, where white men cannot work, but his past intercourse with the European and the European trade, has taught him no good, and he is, as we find him, the result of circumstances which it will take time to alter.

The population of the Brass district is scattered throughout a limited area, intersected by creeks, which are the only highways, but with dry and fertile land in places that might be used for cultivation of rice, sugar-cane, bananas, &c. The people live in sixteen towns or villages, of which Nimbe is the principal. It is impossible for me to form any estimate of the total number of the population of the whole district, free and slave, but the fighting strength is certainly under 2,000, that being, so far as we can learn, above the number that went to attack Akassa, on which occasion all that were able joined in the hope of being present at the plunder and sharing in the revenge for what they regarded as injuries they had suffered through the establishment of the Company.

The language of the Brass district, notwithstanding the fact that so many of the slave population came originally from the Ibo tribes, is similar to that of New Calabar and of the Ejoh people of the Niger Delta. The dialect of each of these districts is distinct, but natives of all three can understand one another. From the Ibo, the Jakri, and the Sobo languages, that of Brass seems to be far apart, being wholly unintelligible to these tribes.

5. The charge brought by the Royal Niger Company against the people of Brass of smuggling, is by them openly admitted. I have shown how impossible it would be for the Brass people to pay taxes and duties to both Administrations, and carry on trade at a profit. Under existing conditions they are and must be smugglers if they are to trade at all, for from the New Calabar markets they are excluded by apparently a stronger people. In former times Brass held a practical monopoly of the Niger trade, for the entrance to the Brass mouth is better than that of Akassa, and the Forcados was not then known as a route to the upper river and its markets; but steam power has altered these conditions, and apart from artificial rules, Brass can no longer compete with other ports.

It is easy to estimate approximately the volume of the smuggling trade, and this could even be accurately ascertained, together with the actual loss caused to the revenue of the Niger Territory now under the Company, if we had detailed returns of the inward and outward trade of the port of Brass. Roughly speaking, it would seem from the Trade Returns for 1892 and 1893 laid before Parliament that, allowing for a certain local demand in the Brass district itself, the revenue thus lost through smuggling must be considerably above 30,000*l.* per annum, while the Company loses otherwise indirectly through difficulties caused with the River tribes and in its commercial operations as a trading body. When we consider that every gallon of spirits introduced through Brass implies a loss of 2*s.* of duty, and every trade gun a loss of 7*s.*, while exports involve a loss of not less than 20 per cent. on the value, some estimate can be formed for the loss to the revenue, which, if the above sum is an approximation to the truth, is equal to one-third of that allowed at present to be collected for administrative purposes of the districts held for the Crown under the Company, or to 7 per cent. on the Company's working capital.

Smuggling being admitted, and the Brass people having always maintained that they traded nowhere but on the Niger, to which Company they never paid duties, it is not necessary to say more on this subject, unless to point out that upon

this smuggling the European traders established at Brass depend for their existence, and that if the Company's Rules were effectually carried out they would of necessity be ruined along with the Brass people, their clients.

6. With reference to the attack made upon Akassa in January last, there is every reason to believe that it had been in view for a long time. It had been, in fact, so often threatened that the danger had come to be disregarded both by the Protectorate officials—whose duty it unquestionably was to take every precaution, and have the means in readiness to prevent such an outrage taking place—and by the officials of the Company.

That the attack was prearranged is shown by the whole population having joined, and the completeness of the preparations made, so that even the villages within 100 yards of the Vice-Consulate and of the traders' houses sent their contingent of men and canoes.

Bishop Tugwell, in writing, speaks of the Brass people having thus given effect to a long-cherished plan when they attacked Akassa. They had repeatedly stated, he says, that one day they would do so, but their threats had been ignored as merely boastful expressions of anger.

The only excuse put forward by the people of Brass in extenuation of cannibalism and of the murder of their innocent prisoners, is that it was their custom under such circumstances to kill and eat those captured; also, that at this time it was thought advisable to have a big human feast in order to get rid of an epidemic of small-pox then prevalent in the district.

Such arguments only show that so long as the Brass people have the power they are a standing menace to the whole district, and that disarmament, if possible, would be one of the first things necessary.

We cannot forget that so recently as two years ago 200 of the Niger Protectorate troops had to be suddenly concentrated at Brass to defend the British merchant factories and the Consulate against a threatened attack, and that in telegraphing for naval assistance on that occasion Her Majesty's Commissioner spoke of the Brass people of Fishtown as a nest of pirates—the same people who took so prominent a part in the attack on Akassa that it was thought necessary this year to destroy their town.

It is difficult to estimate the damage done to the Royal Niger Company on this occasion. Trade goods, furniture, and fittings of all sorts were carried off, also breech-loading arms and ammunition, none of which plunder, with the exception of a few dollars, a quick-firing gun, and a few other articles have as yet been given up. But, in addition to what was stolen, still more injury was done by the destruction of the Company's books, records, and accounts, and by the skilful damage done to machinery by the removal of the more delicate parts where the machines themselves were too solid to be entirely ruined.

Into the value of this plunder and damage it was not my duty to enter.

The loss of human life seems to have amounted to about twenty-four killed at Akassa. The heads of these people were carried off as trophies. About forty-three prisoners were murdered in cold blood at Nimbe and eaten, while twenty-five were eventually released, but only after the town of Nimbe had been attacked and as a condition that trade would be reopened with the coast.

7. The only explanation that can be given of how such a general and long organized an attack could have been carried out without the knowledge of the responsible Government or of the European traders is that the officer in charge (Mr. Harper Moore) was not in touch with the population, and probably knew nothing of what went on outside the walls of his house. Whatever his sympathies may have been with the grievances of the Brass people, it is impossible to suppose that had he known what was being planned and the brutal way in which these savages would act if once their passions were let loose, he would not have taken steps at least to have a force ready to prevent it. This could easily have been done by telegraphing to Bonny, as on the previous occasion when the European Settlement at Brass was in danger.

Mr. Harrison, the officer actually on the spot, had just arrived, and no warning was given him; he had no troops, no reliable interpreter, and no means of visiting the Chiefs at Nimbe unless in a native canoe. It is easy to see that under these conditions he was not in a position to do much or to learn what went on.

On getting the anonymous letter of the 27th January, telling him two days beforehand of what actually happened and begging him to take steps so as to be sure to prevent it, he regarded the whole as an idle story, and without even

telegraphing to his superiors what he had heard, sent on the letter in a merely formal manner to Akassa for what it might be worth.

The Agent-General there did not treat the matter in quite the same manner. He showed it to his subordinate officers, but neither he nor they could believe that an attack in force by the people of Brass was possible, seeing that the Protectorate Government which was responsible had been made fully aware and urged beforehand to take the necessary steps to prevent such an attack.

The Company's officer stationed himself on the night named at the head of the landing-stage, where he placed a quick-firing gun commanding the river, which is there three-quarters of a mile wide. A steamer was also got ready with steam up to keep a watch upon the Brass Creek opposite.

The Agent-General at Akassa evidently thought that although a general attack in force was impossible from the side of the Protectorate, still the Brass people, who were well known to be hostile and to have been of late inciting the tribes on the river to cause trouble, might be able to pass in numbers sufficient to do a certain amount of damage.

As events turned out, the Brass people, having slipped down the Brass River without the knowledge of the Consul, and favoured on reaching the river mouth by the last of the ebb tide and the darkness of the night (it being then new moon), as also by a heavy mist that hung over the river, reached the open mouth near the sea unobserved by the guard boat, and crossing below the factory opened fire on the chief residence from a position in which the shell gun placed at the pier head could not reach them.

Mr. Flint, the Agent-General, escaped on board the steamer after his machine-gun had been disabled, and went up the river believing that all his companions on shore must before then have been killed. Mr. Flint was undoubtedly placed on this occasion in a most trying position. He was not justified in assuming that an attack in force was possible, and so did not take steps that, had he fully believed the warning letter, might have saved the station and enabled him to inflict such a blow as would have crippled the Brass people for a long time to come; but in not believing the letter he only did what the Consul at Brass had done. He was, however, somewhat better informed, for he did make preparations to resist the only attack he believed to be possible, whereas the Protectorate authorities, equally warned, did nothing, the Commissioner not being even informed by telegraph that danger threatened.

As to the Niger tribes and others having joined those of Brass in the attack, we know that the people of New Calabar were applied to but were not present, while the Niger tribes joined in the plunder after the attack had been made and Akassa deserted, and for their share in the transaction they have been punished, as also have those that under Brass influence caused trouble both before and after.

8. The Brass people, like others living under the Niger Coast Protectorate, are well armed with rifles, percussion guns, and cannon, prohibited under the provisions of the Brussels Act.

On the east the British Niger Protectorate has for its next neighbour the German Colony of Cameroons, and on the west the British Crown Colony of Lagos. In the centre, dividing the Protectorate Administration under the Commissioner in two parts, there is the Royal Niger Company's territory, administered by the Company under Charter.

In German Cameroons the sale of modern fire-arms to natives had been absolutely forbidden five years before the Brussels Act came into force as an international obligation, and this prohibition was afterwards confirmed and extended by a local Ordinance to meet the requirements of the Act. In Lagos the Act was at once applied in 1892, so that on either side the Protectorate was from the first well guarded by law against the introduction of arms. In the central region, administered by the Royal Niger Company, a system of total prohibition of every class of modern fire-arms, other than muzzle-loading flint guns, had been in force ever since the Charter was granted in 1886.

The Niger Company was thoroughly doing its duty, and carrying out in anticipation the policy followed by the Powers represented at Brussels; but arms such as rifles, revolvers, and cannon were being freely introduced, notwithstanding rules to the contrary, into the remainder of the Protectorate by the British and foreign traders, who then governed it themselves, acting as what were called "Courts of Equity" in the Oil Rivers. When, in 1891, this system began to be superseded by that of a Commissioner and Consul-General with a proper staff, the attention of

that officer was specially called to the provisions of the Act of Brussels against the introduction of arms. The Brussels Act, which had by that time been signed, and only awaited ratification to make its provisions generally obligatory, forbids the further importation and sale of every description of fire-arms or munitions of war other than flint guns and trade powder.

The delay that occurred between the signature and ratification of the Act had given those interested an opportunity on the Oil Rivers, but not in German Cameroons or the Niger Company's territories, of anticipating its operation by landing a stock of guns—as, in 1893, they again did of percussion caps, when it was anticipated these would be interfered with. When, therefore, the Act should have come into force on the 2nd April, 1892, the mischief had to a large extent been done and valuable time lost. It is to be regretted also that the stock in hand of prohibited articles, was allowed to be sold off even up to the present year, and that the Act was not in full operation until August, 1894. Thus so lately as two years ago, and, therefore, after the Brussels Act should have been in full operation, a Brass Chief purchased from Mr. Jinks, agent of the Oil Rivers Trading Company at Brass, an 18-pr. brass cannon, fitted and mounted. This was sold on the plea that this formidable piece of artillery, specially prohibited by the Act and the Customs Law of the Protectorate alike, had been imported some time previously.

One of the first acts of the new Administration when established in 1891 was to repeat the Consular Order issued by Vice-Consul H. H. Johnston) which had been neglected, and to forbid the further introduction of breech-loading rifles, cannon, and machine-guns, but muzzle-loading percussion guns, rifles, revolvers, percussion caps, and ammunition generally were still allowed to pass in unlimited quantities although prohibited by the Brussels Act.

When we consider that traders have been until now permitted to go on working off their stock, it is easy to see the many ways in which the law may have been evaded, as we are told it was previous to 1891.

The extent to which, however, the import of certain classes of arms and munitions of war went on up to the end of last year at Brass and elsewhere in the Protectorate, may be gathered from the published Trade Returns of 1892 and 1893 (see F. O. Reports, annual series, Nos. 1144 and 1618), where we find there were declared at the Custom-houses of the Protectorate in the year 1892 no less than 62,272 guns, of which 18,746 were percussion weapons, 34,410 cartridges, 33,370,550 percussion caps, 637,248 lbs. powder; and in 1893, 14,459 percussion guns, and the enormous amount of 258,893,750 percussion caps.

When I was on the coast in June last, although the new Ordinance for the application of the Brussels Act, approved in London in April 1894, and brought into operation on the coast the following August, was in force, the traders still retained arms and powder in their own stores and under their sole control. No steps had then been taken to insure that forbidden guns, gun-caps (of which latter no less than over 258,000,000 had just been imported in order to anticipate the law), or ammunition on hand might not still be sold, or the control over trade guns and gunpowder taken out of the traders' hands. Before I left the coast Sir Claude MacDonald had, however, issued orders on these points, and generally that the Act should be most strictly carried into effect. It still remains to construct the necessary Government warehouses, which are indispensable, as the traders' stores are nowhere safe against attack, in which case the arms and ammunition they contain would be carried off, as they were at Akassa, to be used afterwards against our troops. As regards cannon, I believe that most of those used by the Brass people were of old pattern, and introduced long ago. The Brass people never possessed machine-guns, their only quick-firing gun, which was taken from Akassa, being now restored.

All cannon that fell into our hands at Nimbe and Fishtown were blown up with guncotton; others have been since given up, but the Chiefs admit that they still retain others, including certainly one effective piece (that sold to Chief Wari by Mr. Jinks of Brass). They state, however, that what they now have left are, with the above exception, old guns of Portuguese origin. This, however, requires verification.

Evidence was shown that the whole Protectorate is now filled with Snider and other rifles, and with percussion guns, the number of which may be inferred from the enormous importation of percussion caps already mentioned as having taken place so lately as 1893. An instructive Return was shown me at Brass of the percussion arms and breech-loading rifles declared by the people of three small

villages, the only ones where at that time stamping of arms had been carried out. This showed how well the district is supplied with weapons of the best type. In these three villages there were no less than sixty-nine Sniders, fifteen Martini rifles, twenty-three of other sorts, and seventy-one percussion guns. Sir Claude MacDonald admitted, at the meeting of Akassa, that it was phenomenal the extent to which the whole country is armed.

I had when at Akassa an opportunity given me of examining Snider rifles that had been sold in districts to the east of the Niger quite lately; they had come from behind New Calabar, were of recent make, and in excellent order, the rifling in the barrel being perfect. They could be bought, we were told, in considerable quantity along with the necessary ammunition; but the very low price at which they had been sold seemed to indicate that the market at the coast must have been at the time overstocked, possibly owing to the operation of the new Arms Act beginning to tell at New Calabar, and to the consequent desire of those holding stocks that might at any moment be confiscated, to part with what remained on hand even at a loss. Thus we were told that the supply of rifles and ammunition now for sale outside the Company's territory was large, a matter of great importance when we come to consider how the Brass people can be disarmed.

In dealing with the question of arms in a country such as the Niger Delta we must not forget that percussion caps and breech-loading ammunition will not remain serviceable in the hands of natives for any length of time, and that unless fresh supplies of these can be obtained, the present arms, which are chiefly Snider and Martini rifles, or percussion guns, will soon become useless.

It is to be noted that the Brass people have not yet given up all their cannon, but, on the contrary, have kept the best in disregard of their agreement. They have retained, or rather consumed, all the plunder, and have suffered comparatively little unless through the stoppage of trade for a time.

The question how the Brass River can now be most promptly and effectually placed on the footing on which the Protecting Power is bound to place it, as regards arms and ammunition, in accordance with the obligations under the Brussels Act, resolves itself into how the provisions of that Act can be applied to the whole of the Coast Protectorate. Lagos on the one side, and German Cameroons on the other, are on a satisfactory footing in this respect as regards future imports, although the natives still hold what they before possessed. So also is the Niger Company's territory, which divides the Coast Protectorate in two portions. These have for now several years excluded fire-arms and ammunition of modern pattern, so that to a large extent the work of disarmament must by this time have been done. The Niger Company has, however, found itself invaded chiefly, if not entirely, from its eastern land side, and the Niger Protectorate generally is now filled with rifles to a phenomenal extent.

To deal with the Brass district apart from the rest of the Protectorate would be useless, for if disarmed now the people would obtain a fresh supply before long by purchase from neighbouring districts where arms that have already been introduced are offered for sale and plentiful. To disarm the whole country, which alone would be effective, is, however, not to be thought of. It is beyond the power of the Protectorate Government, which as yet is only beginning to make its influence felt outside the Coast Settlements; nor is a general disarmament of natives who held arms, legally acquired and introduced, prior to April 1892 (the date on which the Act came into effect), a thing contemplated in the provisions of the Brussels Act.

We know as yet little of the tribes and of the country they inhabit, and to attempt to disarm the population by any sudden and violent action would end in failure, the ruin of trade, and a general rising. Fortunately, most of the arms the natives now possess depend, in order to be effective, upon a constant supply of special ammunition from outside, the further importation of which we ought to be able to prevent to a large extent under the Arms Ordinance of 1894 at the ports of entry; but as percussion caps and cartridges will be much sought after, and as they are both articles easy of concealment, it will require a very strict watch being kept over every class of imported goods in order to prevent smuggling.

If this is done, before long many of the guns now in use will become unserviceable for want of ammunition. At the same time, as the country is now so well armed, it would be good policy to stop the sale locally for a time of even trade gunpowder at such a place as Brass, in order to induce the more rapid exhaustion of the breech-loading ammunition which the people now possess. The

cannon that remain in the hands of the Chiefs of Brass, which are all forfeited under the terms they accepted, should be still demanded; their surrender was one of the few conditions imposed, and it has not been loyally fulfilled; we are therefore fully justified in still insisting upon the surrender of what remains in their hands.

As, however, from long usage the firing of cannon has come to be the mark of authority, and associated with certain great occasions, such as feasts, marriages, funerals, &c., it might be well worthy of consideration whether suitable mortars, that would be of no use as weapons of offence, should not be allowed to be sold or given in exchange for the cannons. This would be no violation of the Brussels Act so long as these were no weapons of war, but only useful for saluting purposes, and to be fired with trade powder and special detonating shells.

In any case the disarmament of the country, which is a matter of policy apart from the Brussels Act, can only be the work of some time. It is, however, in our power to see, as we are bound to do, that no fresh introductions of arms are made, and by the voluntary stamping and registration of all arms other than trade guns now possessed by the people, we can in a measure control the use of those already in native hands, and gradually, as occasion offers, seize hereafter all that have not been produced and stamped as they are found—an operation that will cause less opposition after the chance has been given the people of declaring and having legalized what they now possess.

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Report by Sir John Kirk on the Disturbances at
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